

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 CU-02 SCCT-01 DHA-02 OPR-02

OMB-01 SY-05 A-01 /089 W

----- 006451

R 231344Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1154

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY RABAT

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E.O.: 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, TS

SUBJ: STUDENT DEMONSTRATION FAILS MATERIALIZE

REF : TUNIS 7617

1. TUNISIAN RIOT POLICE RINGED TUNIS UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

AFTERNOON DEC. 19, EFFECTIVELY PREVENTING ANY TRAFFIC TO OR FROM CAMPUS. CORDON REMAINED IN PLACE INTO EARLY EVENING, AT WHICH POINT POLICE WITHDREW AND STUDENTS DISPERSED TO HOMES QUIETLY. THERE WAS APPARENTLY NO CLASH BETWEEN STUDENTS AND POLICE.

2. MORNING SATURDAY, DEC. 20, STUDENT ACTIVITY WAS NORMAL AT CAMPUS. GROUP OF LAW STUDENTS DISCUSSING INITIAL VIOLENCE AT FACULTY OF LETTERS (PARA 1, REFTEL) CONDEMNED IT AS ACT OF CHILDISHNESS BY STUDENTS OF THAT FACULTY, ACT WITH WHICH LAW STUDENTS DISAGREED. HOWEVER, THEY SAID, VICIOUSNESS OF GOT RESPONSE, WHICH THEY CHARACTERIZED AS ILLEGAL TRIAL WITH

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NO OPPORTUNITY FOR DEFENSE AGAINST CHARGES, AND UNREASONABLY

HARSH SENTENCES, WOULD KEEP POT BOILING. STUDENTS ASKING THEMSELVES, THEY SAID, WHY A GOVERNMENT AS STRONG AS GOT CURRENTLY IS COULD NOT TOLERATE FREELY ELECTED STUDENT UNION, AND GENUINE DIALOGUE BETWEEN UNION AND COUNTRY'S ONE POLITICAL PARTY.

3. YOUNG LAWYER PROMINENT IN DEFENSE OF STUDENTS IN PREVIOUS TRIALS ASSERTS FACULTY OF LETTERS STUDENTS TRIED ON 17TH (REFTEL) WERE NOT EVEN REPRESENTED BY ATTORNEYS, AND THAT JUDGE HAD NEVER PREVIOUSLY HEARD A CRIMINAL CASE. HE FURTHER ALLEGED THAT IN ADDITION TO FIVE PERSONS TRIED AND SENTENCED (ONE IN ABSENTIA), POLICE ARE HOLDING ABOUT FIFTY MORE STUDENTS IN CONNECTION SAME INCIDENT PENDING EITHER CLEARANCE OR TRAIL.

4. MINISTRY INTERIOR CONTACTS DEC. 22 STATE THAT STUDENT SITUATION HAS CALMED DOWN. THEY REFLECT DETERMINATION, HOWEVER, THAT IRON FIST APPROACH WILL CONTINUE BE USED IF STUDENTS TURN TO VIOLENCE.

5. SOME EFFORT TO BE CONCILIATORY IS BEING MADE: STUDENT CAFETERIA ON CAMPUS, SUBJECT OF MANY COMPLAINTS, SERVED DEC. 20 LAVISH LUNCH OF COUSCOUS WITH CHICKEN WHICH HAD STUDENTS MUCH ENTHUSED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TUNIS07663
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750445-0925
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751217/aaaaaovz.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TUNIS 7617
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 MAY 2003 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <07 AUG 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STUDENT DEMONSTRATION FAILS MATERIALIZE
TAGS: PINT, PINS, TS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006